

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15th District



For Immediate Release
March 13, 2007

Press Contact: Gregg W. Bortz
610-861-9734 or (cell) 202-222-5118

Rep. Dent seeks better screening of high-risk passengers and cargo coming into U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent, (PA-15), a member of the House Committee, today introduced three amendments to HR 1401, the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007, to enhance screening of high-risk passengers and cargo coming into the United States.

Congressman Dent's initial amendment to enhance rail cargo security was approved by the Committee on voice vote. This amendment calls for the deployment of a radiographic imaging or equivalent system that can inspect railroad cars for contraband, weapons of mass destructions, and illegal aliens. It also requires U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to collect additional information about the contents, packaging, and points of origin and destination of these rail shipments.

Two other amendments lost in a party-line vote. One amendment would have formalized the adoption of the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) for screening passengers coming into the country via surface transportation. This amendment would have required buses and passenger trains that operate internationally to submit a passenger manifest to CPB in advance of each arrival in or departure from the United States. By promoting this activity, the Congressman noted, "we can help identify those who might wish to do us harm *before* they cross the U.S. border." Noting that airlines are already submitting this manifest information to APIS, the

Congressman asked, “Why shouldn’t we have the same advance notification on bus or train passengers who are trying to enter the U.S. from a foreign country?”

The other amendment would have promoted the continued use of the Automated Targeting System for Passengers (ATS-P), which is already employed to screen airline passengers coming to the U.S. from other countries. This provision would have authorized the Department of Homeland Security to deploy ATS-P at all of our nation’s international bus and rail ports of entry. The ATS-P system takes passenger manifest information and compares it with items contained within other federal databases to determine if a person seeking to enter this country might be a person of interest — because of his or possible role as a potential terrorist, human trafficker, or smuggler of contraband — to border security officials.

“The 9/11 Commission recommended that the government establish a screening system that ‘will establish that people are who they say they are, intercept identifiable suspects, and disrupt terrorist organizations,’ ” Congressman Dent said. “APIS and ATS-P are part and parcel of such a system. It is unfortunate that the majority of our committee did not see fit to include this border *security* priority in the body of what is supposed to be a rail and mass transit *security* bill.”

This bill will now be sent to the floor of the House for further consideration.

###